

New Book: "Civil Sights" Chronicles Sweet Auburn's Legacy as National Treasure

A definitive history of the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement, and a call to preserve it

Historic preservationist, real estate developer, and author Gene Kansas announces the February 1st release of "[Civil Sights: Sweet Auburn, a Journey Through Atlanta's National Treasure](#)," an exploration of the birthplace of Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement. Co-published by the University of Georgia Press and Georgia Humanities, the book serves as both a resource and an illustrated guide for preserving one of America's most historically significant neighborhoods.



Through detailed storytelling and architectural insight, Kansas shares the stories of remarkable individuals who made history before, during, and after the Civil Rights Movement. While honoring iconic leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, and Ella Baker, the book also brings to light the unknown, unsung, and underrepresented heroines and heroes whose contributions were vital to the movement's success. This approach helps readers recognize just how deeply the people and places of Sweet Auburn shaped the fight for civil rights.

Designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1976, Sweet Auburn has since lost nearly 47% of its historic structures—a stark reminder that the preservation of our shared heritage is in jeopardy, requiring immediate action. The book features illustrations by Atlanta architect Clay Kiningham, a foreword by *New York Times* bestselling author Gary M. Pomerantz ("Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn"), and an afterword by scholar and cultural editor Dr. Jacqueline Jones Royster. Together, they create a call to preserve not just buildings but rights, traditions, stories, ideals, and customs that shaped our nation and inspired the world.

Through micro-biographies, architectural histories, curriculum, and additional reading, "Civil Sights" provides information and inspiration for individuals and groups to unite and make a positive impact through their own projects, lesson plans, conversations, and actions. As Kansas reminds us, "The future of our civil rights history is not guaranteed. At risk are irreplaceable landmarks and the lessons they are so aptly positioned to impart."

A series of events throughout February 2025 will celebrate the book's release:

February 12th: Official Book Launch (7-9 PM) Auburn Avenue Research Library Featuring Gene Kansas, Errin Haines (Editor of *The 19th*), poet Mario Reyes, cultural editor Dr. Jacqueline Jones Royster, and the Mario Fogg Quartet, with host Jon Goode (*The Moth*).

February 19th: Panel Discussion (7-8:30 PM) Atlanta History Center Featuring Gene Kansas, Dr. Jacqueline Jones Royster, and Ed Bowen, moderated by Mike Jordan (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*)

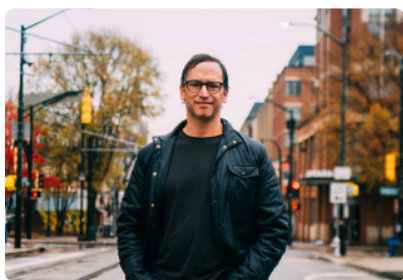
"Civil Sights" will be available at bookstores nationwide and through online retailers. Pre-orders are available now via [UGA Press](#) and encouraged by Kansas-by contacting your local independent bookstore.

About Gene Kansas: Rooted in New Orleans culture, Gene Kansas is an award-winning developer, preservationist, and social entrepreneur whose work bridges past and present through thoughtful and conscientious development. [Gene Kansas | Commercial Real Estate](#) specializes in culturally impactful projects that celebrate and preserve the unique character of historic buildings and neighborhoods while fostering modern community connections.

Contact Information

Source: Civil Sights

Additional Images



Author Gene Kansas in Sweet Auburn. Picture by Drew Perlmutter.



Civil Sights Book Cover

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